

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2439

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH

SUBJ: POSSIBLE PUBLICATION OF STORY DAMAGING TO QUEEN SIRIKET

1. THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER, CHARUNPHAN, CALLED ME THIS AFTERNOON AND ASKED MY ASSISTANCE IN SQUELCHING THE POSSIBLE PUBLICATION OF A STORY WHICH ORIGINATED IN LONDON FEBRUARY 4, CONCERNING QUEEN SIRIKIT. THE AP STORY OF FEBRUARY 10 FOLLOWS: QUOTE: LONDON: THE DAILY MIRROR PUBLISHED A PHOTOGRAPH OF A NUDE PAINTING THURSDAY AND SAID THE SUBJECT WAS THAILAND'S QUEEN SIRIKIT AND THE ARTIST HER HUSBAND, KING BHUMIPHOL.

THE PAINTING DEPICTED A SHAPELY NAKED WOMAN KNEELING WITH HER HANDS ON HER KNEES.

'THE PAINTING IS AMONG DOZENS JUST LIKE IT WHICH LINE THE WALLS OF THE COUPLE'S PRIVATE HOME IN BANGKOK,' THE MASS CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER REPORTED. 'THEY ARE SEEN ONLY BY MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS.'

THE PAPER SAID THE KING HAS WON SEVERAL PRIZES AT ART EXHIBITIONS. ITIFFNED: 'HIS 42-YEAR-OLD WIFE, THE MOTHER OF HIS CHILDREN, CLEARLY ENJOYS POSING XVBMVDUNQUOHX.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE

REPUBLICATION OF THE STORY BY TIME OR NEWSWEEK MAGAZINES OR OTHER UNITED STATES PUBLICATIONS WHICH MIGHT REACH
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THAILAND. AS HE EXPRESSED IT, THE ARTICLE WAS NOT BASED

ON FACT, IT WAS INSULTING TO THE QUEEN AND WOULD REPRESENT A CASE OF LESE-MAJESTE TO THE KING WHO, AS HE EXPRESSED IT IS "MORE OR LESS DIVINE" IN THAILAND. HE TOLD ME THAT THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAD EXPRESSED HIS DEEP REGRET AND APOLOGIZED ABOUT ITS PUBLICATION IN THE DAILY MIRROR. CHARUNPHAN ALSO INFORMED ME THAT THE RTG HAD CONTACTED THE STRINGER OFFICES OF NEWSWEEK AND TIME. WITH REGARD TO TIME, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION HAS BEEN OBTAINED: TIME SENT A TELEGRAM TO THEIR STRINGER IN BANGKOK AND ASKED HIM TO PREPARE SOMETHING ABOUT THE STORY FOR POSSIBLE USE IN THEIR "PEOPLE" SECTION. TELEGRAM FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: SCHEDULING ITEM ON QUEEN SIRIKIT IN THE NUDE. CLOSING THURSDAY, FEB. 13 NEED ANSWER TUESDAY AFTERNOON, FEB 11.

THE LONDON DAILY MIRROR PUBLISHED A PIX OF A NUDE AND SAID IT WAS A PAINTING OF QUEEN SIRIKIT OF THAILAND BY HUSBAND KING BHUMIBOL ADULYADEJ. THE PHOTO SHOWED PAINTING OF A SHAPELY NUDE KNEELING WITH HER HANDS ON HER KNEES. THE MIRROR SAID: 'THE PAINTING IS AMONG DOZENS JUST LIKE IT WHICH LINE THE WALLS OF THE COUPLE'S PRIVATE HOME IN BANGKOK. THEY ARE SEEN ONLY BY MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS.'

WE HAVE PIX AND ARE PLANNING TO RUN IT. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR CONFIRMATION OF WHAT THE DAILY MAIL REPORTED. WILL NEED ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN GET ON THE PIX, THE KING'S OTHER PAINTINGS, REACTION IN THAILAND.

HAVE THE PIX PUBLISHED ANYWHERE IN S.E. ASIA?

ALSO QUERYING LONDON.

UNQUOTE

3. THE TIME STRINGER TOLD THE MAGAZINE THAT IT WOULD BE ILL-ADVISED TO USE THE STORY SINCE IT WAS UNAUTHENTICATED, WOULD BE CONSIDERED HERE A GRIEVOUS INSULT WITH GRAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE FUTURE OF TIME MAGAZINE IN THAILAND AND FOR ITS STRINGER. THE STRINGER CONTACTED TIME'S REGIONAL CORRESPONDENT IN SAIGON AND INFORMED HIM OF THE SITUATION. THE CORRESPONDENT, PETER RANGE, APPARENTLY TELEGRAPHED TIME MAGAZINE INSISTING THAT THE STORY NOT BE USED. TIME'S STRINGER IN BANGKOK THEN WENT TO THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, EXPLAINED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO HIM THAT TIME HAD MADE A REQUEST FOR THE STORY, AND INFORMED HIM OF THE STRINGER'S REPLY TO TIME.

4. HARRY ROLNICK, NEWSWEEK'S STRINGER IN BANGKOK, WAS OUT OF TOWN TODAY AND WE COULD NOT CONTACT HIM. HIS SUBSTITUTE, HOWEVER, SAID THAT NEWSWEEK QUERIED ROLNICK ABOUT THE STORY. ROLNICK TALKED WITH THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THEN TOLD NEWSWEEK

THAT THE STORY AND PICTURE WERE UNAUTHENTICATED AND BASE-
LESS. ACCORDING TO ROLNICK'S SUBSTITUTE, NEWSWEEK SAID
THEY DID NOT INTEND TO CARRY THE STORY.

5. CHARUNPHAN INFORMED ME THAT IF THIS STORY WERE REPEATED
IN AMERICAN WEEKLIES THAT IT COULD HAVE A VERY DAMAGING
IMPACT ON U.S.-THAI RELATIONS. HE ASKED ME TO DO EVERY-
THING I COULD TO STOP PUBLICATION. I UNDERSTAND THAT
TIME AND POSSIBLY NEWSWEEK GO TO BED ON SATURDAY, FEB 15TH.
THERE SHOULD BE TIME, THEREFORE, TO KILL THE STORY IF THIS HAS
NOT YET BEEN DONE. I STRONGLY URGE YOU TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE
TO PREVENT THE PUBLICATION OF THIS STORY IN ANY U.S. WEEKLY.
KINTNER

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